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BRAZIL IN AFRICA: A HISTORY OF MODERN SOUTH-SOUTH COOPERATION

PhD thesis

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1. BACKGROUND AND RELEVANCE OF TOPIC

1.1 Thematic background

South-South cooperation is the rising star of the New International Economic Order (NIEO) that is to shape relations among nation-states in the 21st century. An unprecedented level of interaction among developing countries has been document since the last decades of the previous millennium, with all its implications on geopolitics, trade, commerce and social sciences on a global scale. States that have never traded before – for not existing as independent nations or for being dominate by more powerful nations – have suddenly started noticing each other. Brazil is just one of various emerging nations that have started investing heavily into upgrading their South-South relations starting from the 1990s. Financial crisis, market saturation in the North, globalization and economic growth in the South have all influenced the direction of trade flows in the world economy. In addition, the non-fulfillment of what the North-South Dialogue had promised to its beneficiaries worldwide (lower disparity in living standards, more democratic institutions in the South), has created disillusion in the less developed world, who are now seeking to find their own ways to achieving social and economic development instead of copying the Western model to the letter. The traditional *North-to-South model* is being questioned by the emerging countries, and Africa has become the main playing field in South-South Development Cooperation (SSDC).

There are various players in the South-South exchange, from traditional powerhouses such as China and India, through reemerging empires such as Turkey and Russia all the way to newcomers like Mexico and Brazil. The thesis analyzes the foreign relations of South America's economic and political powerhouse, Brazil, with the countries of the African continent, focusing particularly on the Portuguese-speaking world of the Sub-Saharan region.

1.2 Novelty of the thesis

South-South Development Cooperation (SSDC) has been the topic of academic research starting only in the second half of the 20th century. Before the 1970s, the term 'South-South' did not even exist as most countries that we today consider the Global South were occupied by countries

of the North. Relations among them were channeled through the respective Metropoles, which had exclusivity on every aspect of commercial, political and societal interaction between the overseas territories of different nations. Since the 70s a wide range of essays and scholarly articles have been published on the topic, the first such erudite discussions focused on China's increasingly active role in Africa. Sino-African research has encompassed all layers of human interaction, from economic exchanges to areas of cultural expansionism and geopolitical-security considerations. Indian-African relations are being analyzed mainly from a historical perspective, focusing on diaspora study and the effects of the colonial measures taken by the British administration. Turkey's resurgence in Africa is seen as part of wider political-cultural campaign to reassert its Ottoman imperial past on particularly the North Africa and the Horn of Africa regions. The study of Brazilian-African relations was triggered by President Luiz Inacio "Lula" da Silva's staunch South-South rhetoric and Africanist policies in the early 2000s. A flurry of scholarly research activity followed, mainly by South American academicians trying to decipher the content, objectives and consequences of the measures implemented by the Lula and succeeding administrations. A smaller, but equally noteworthy intellectual discussion on this new phenomenon of periphery-to-periphery dialogue ensued in Africa, Europe and Asia.

This dissertation is a novelty in the way that it is the first publication in the field of contemporary Brazilian-African relations from a Hungarian researcher. The fact that I am neither Brazilian nor African, nor do I come from any of the former colonizer nations lend me the neutral, unbiased perspective of an outsider when studying the topic. At the same time, having lived in all three locations (Brazil, Africa and former colonial powers Belgium and Spain), have acquainted me with hands-on experience of the colonial legacy. In addition to the historical, ideological and geopolitical aspects, I also look at the institutional and domestic factors that shape Brazilian cooperation with the African countries and dedicate a section to the analysis of private-sector interests that are at play in the background.

2. METHODOLOGY AND STRUCTURE

2.1 Methodology

The thesis relies on three main sources of information: (1) literature analysis; (2) the analysis of primary sources (statistical data and survey data); and (3) case study analysis of institutionalized and non-institutional actors in Brazilian SSDC.

Primary sources include interviews conducted with experts at the Eötvös Loránd University (ELTE) in Hungary, the Gordon Institute of Business Science (GIBS) of the University of Pretoria in South Africa, the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS) in Porto Alegre, Brazil, and with diplomats of the Brazilian Embassy in Nairobi, Kenya. In addition, a questionnaire was sent out to six of the major enterprises involved in Brazilian-African commerce, of which three were returned and evaluated as part of this paper, the compilation of which is presented at the end of the thesis, in the Annex.

Secondary sources include the following literature in Hungarian, English, Portuguese, Spanish, German and French languages: scholarly articles, publications in the field of SSDC, press releases and archives of international and governmental organizations, news outlets and corporations involved in Brazilian-African trade, research papers and essays of topic-related institutes, think tanks. The following research institutes were consulted: AHU Hungarian Africa-Knowledge Database (Afrika Tudástár), Institute for Applied Economic Research (IPEA), Brazilian Centre for African Studies (CEBRAFRICA) and Center for Strategy and International Relations at Rio Grande Sul Federal University (NERINT/UFRGS), Study Group on Africa (GEÁFRICA) of the Federal University of Pampa (UNIPAMPA), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Federative Republic of Brazil (Itamaraty), the Brazilian Cooperation Agency (ABC), the Alexandre de Gusmão Foundation (FUNAG), the Getulio Vargas Foundation (FGV), the Lula Institute, the Research Center for South-South Cooperation (Articulação Sul), World Bank (WB) and the United Nations (UN).

2.2 Structure

The structure of the doctoral dissertation is built on three blocks of descriptive, comparative and case study analysis.

Section I gives a *descriptive, theoretical background* to the North-South paradigm and world systems theories, as well as introduce the history of development cooperation to the reader. I studied the most influential development theoreticians of the 20th century, from *Immanuel Wallerstein* to *Fernand Braudel*, *Robert Keohane* and *Joseph Nye*. The findings of Brazilian social geographer *Milton Santos*, American economist *Joseph Stiglitz* and German political theorists *Karl Marx* and *Friedrich Engels* have also been included in this paper.

Section II, III and IV familiarize the reader with the *historical context* relating to Brazilian-African relations from the time of Cabral's discovery up to today. It also recapitulates Brazil's cultural, culinary, musical, religious and ethnographic connections with Africa.

Section III gives an overview of the *ideological motivations* behind Brazil's newly developed SSDC strategy. The ideological motivations also include the geopolitical and economic considerations that arise from Africa's integration into the globalized economy in the shape of multilateral associations with Brazil and other emerging powers. The South American nations' post-War political orientation are analyzed in the context of South-South relations, from the Bandung Conference of 1955 via the Independent Foreign Policy (PEI) proclaimed by President Jânio Quadros in 1961 to the Brazil-Russia-India-China-South Africa (BRICS) initiative of 2006.

Section IV introduces the reader to the *institutional dimensions* shaping the country's SSDC policies. Brazilian development policy is anchored in four principles: (1) solidarity (non-indifference); (2) non-interference; (3) non-conditionality; and (4) complementarity (mutual benefit). The government institution mandated to coordinate all international development cooperation projects is the Brazilian Cooperation Agency (ABC). The ABC works with various specialized institutes and private companies to deliver on the agreed projects. We look at the activities and role of the most well-known public institutes that shape Brazil's development policies in Africa: National Service for Industrial Training (SENAI), the Brazilian Agricultural Research Corporation (EMBRAPA), and the Oswaldo Cruz Foundation (FIOCRUZ). Financing is provided for these projects mainly by Brazilian Development Bank (BNDES) and *Brazilian Export Credit Agency* (APEX). More than 80 operations and a portfolio of US\$7 billion in credit

lines have been approved since 2006 for Africa, with Angola receiving 23% of total disbursements between 2007 and 2012.¹

Section V highlights the role of the *non-institutional players* – especially that of the private sector – through Case Studies in formulating SSDC agenda priorities. The civil sector is briefly discussed, especially with respect to the domestic opposition to one of the most controversial development projects, called ProSAVANA. Another topic touched upon is the democratizing of foreign policy and civic dialogue, namely the *Platform for BNDES Transparency* and other government and civil society spaces related to SSDC. The six companies selected for the Case Studies (Petrobras, Vale, Odebrecht, Andrade Gutierrez, OAS, Camargo Corrêa) represent the core of Brazilian private sector involvement in the country's SSDC policies. A section will be devoted to the Operation Car Wash, the largest money laundering and graft scheme in Brazil's history that implicates executives of the above companies and even the highest levels of government administration. The paper concludes with a *general evaluation of the evidence presented* and the conclusions drawn on the hypotheses.

At the suggestion of Amb. Professor András Balogh of the ELTE University of Budapest, Hungary, I based the comparative analysis part of the paper (sections II-IV) on certain motivations, or dimensions, that are shared by both Brazil and the African countries. The Milani-matrix served as very useful model for setting up the variables of comparison. As visible in the table below, Milani identifies four variables (historical, geopolitical, institutional and domestic politics) as basis of comparison of SSDC strategies of individual states. I have modified these variables slightly (historical, ideological, institutional and non-institutional), but left the premises elaborated by Milani intact.

Table 1. Comparative Matrix for South-South Development Cooperation (SSDC)

¹ BNDES website. <http://www.bndes.gov.br>

Research questions	Dependent variable	Dimensions and independent variables	Assumptions
<p>MAIN RESEARCH QUESTION: how do “new powers” conceive and implement their south-south developmentcooperation strategies?</p> <p>RELATED RESEARCH QUESTIONS: how are such strategies linked to foreign policy agendas? Can the six selected rising powers, through their SSC strategies, step up and accept leadership, as well as collective commitment and shared decision making? Do these countries challenge the cooperation for development system (OECD, World Bank) with innovative practices and new rules of the game? Have they learned from past mistakes made within the framework of traditional North-South Cooperation strategies?</p>	<p>Profile of SSC-D of the six selected countries in post-1989 world order:</p> <p>- The nature of the development cooperation: donation/grants, loans on concessional basis; technical cooperation; commercial subsidies; amounts allocated; sectors and public policies involved (health, culture, infrastructure, education, etc.); emphasis on multilateral or bilateral cooperation.</p> <p>- The norms of the development cooperation: patterns, values, concepts; analysis of emblematic projects.</p>	<p><u>Historical (contextual and formative variable):</u> how have SSC strategies been historically integrated in national foreign policy agendas? (foreign policy priorities and diplomatic history; political autonomy and new coalitions; multilateral experience)</p>	<p>The legacy of North-South relations, struggle for decolonization, the fight for a new international economic order in the sixties and seventies, the input of dependency theory and world-systems theory, among other independent variables, play a significant historical role (a) in the framing (social representation, national history) of international problems and (b) in the conception of viable alliances and coalitions.</p> <p>The definition of SSC-D strategies follows a complex decision making process in which geopolitical and economic factors work as key intervening variables (economic relevance and geopolitical agency). SSC strategies implemented by “new powers” also depend on their national and collective capabilities (material and economic strength), geographical location (regional priorities), and cultural affinity (being part of a community).</p> <p>SSC-D strategies are not homogeneous: they may assume the specific shape of technical cooperation, may be more focused on bilateral cooperation, and also the result of the internationalization of public policies. There is a need to empirically analyze such development cooperation schemes and set up empirical typologies which may reveal distinct country profiles in terms of political behavior and soft power projection.</p> <p>Institutional experience is heterogeneous, and is related to (a) the national political and bureaucratic relevance of each ministry of external relations, (b) the existence and relative autonomy of an aid agency, (c) the multilateral experience of each country, (d) the support to self-determination and sovereignty in international relations, and (e) the demands of domestic actors (professionalization, transparency).</p> <p>Democratization and internationalization of bureaucracies and societies are key variables for political participation in SSC decision making. The politics of domestic actors in each country influences the negotiation and implementation behavior of States. Leaders, their personalities and beliefs also play a relevant role in this process. Regime and government changes (dramatic regime change or change through elections) have effects on foreign policy agendas and SSC strategies.</p>
		<p><u>Geopolitical (contextual and constitutive variable):</u> what are the geopolitical and economic motivations of SSC-D strategies? What are their implications? (relationship with international and collective security; links with regional integration processes, trade and investment priorities; relationship with internationalization of business and market access to national companies)</p>	
		<p><u>Institutional (independent variable):</u> what are the hard and soft institutions established in the field of SSC in each country? (establishment of an aid agency; decision-making process; the role of advisors; the role of the ministry of external relations and other ministries or agencies - bureaucratic politics; subnational entities; features of leadership)</p>	
		<p><u>Domestic politics (independent variable):</u> what are the main actors and agendas of current SSC-D policies? (social legitimization; non institutional actors; public opinion)</p>	

Table 2: Qualitative analytical matrix (source: elaborated by the author).

Source: Milani R.S., Carlos, PhD. *South-South Cooperation and Foreign Policy Agendas: a comparative framework*. Instituto de Estudos Sociais e Políticos, IESP. Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro, UERJ.11 June 2012.

2.3 Case Studies

The companies chosen for the Case Studies are the most visible representatives of Brazilian economic output on the African continent. The six conglomerates selected (Petrobras, Vale, Odebrecht, Andrade Gutierrez, OAS, Camargo Corrêa) are all majority-state-owned mammoth industrial enterprises, established during the Vargas-era to speed up industrialization in the 50s. These firms have been endowed with special rights (monopolies or preferential treatment) and received government backing since their birth, which propelled them to leading positions in their fields of expertise (oil and gas exploration, construction and engineering, civil works). It is of no coincidence that these exact same companies benefit the most from Brazil’s SSDC as far as construction tenders for development projects in Africa are concerned. An overwhelming majority of Brazilian economic activity in Africa is driven by these companies, which are the beneficiaries of generous loans from Brazil’s development bank, the BNDES.

The interlinking of generations of political decision-makers and executives of the so-called “National Champions” lead in 2014 to the unravelling of Brazil’s largest corruption scandal, that lead to the impeachment of President Dilma Rousseff in 2016 and thwarted President Lula’s chances of running for a third term in 2018. The investigations are still ongoing, with over 300 top executives and government official being indicted up until today.

The final chapter of the paper offers an evaluative overview of the author’s findings and draws conclusions on the validity of the hypotheses. It also recapitulates the evidence and gives a prognosis of what is expected to come in the future regarding strategies in Brazilian SSDC.

2.4 Hypothesis

The hypotheses of the dissertation intend to prove that the

- (1) the **uniqueness of Brazilian-African cooperation is inherently related to the long-standing historical ties** between the two parties;
- (2) nevertheless, there exists an **overemphasis on the relevance of these ties with respect to modern-day business relations** between the two sides of the Atlantic Ocean; and
- (3) Behind the façade of the Brazilian government’s rhetoric about ‘brotherhood, solidarity and non-conditionality’ lies a **hidden economic agenda that drives Brazil’s South-South partnership** to at least the same extent as its philanthropism.

The geographic focus of the paper will be the Portuguese-speaking African countries (commonly known as PALOP counties – Mozambique, Angola, Guinea-Bissau, Cape Verde and São Tomé and Príncipe), as these states are the main partners to Brazil’s SSDC engagement on the continent.

3. MAIN FINDINGS

3.1 Brazilian-African relations are unique because of the shared history

Historical, cultural, anthropological and geological similarities of the two sides of the Atlantic Ocean are undeniable. Brazil and Africa share a colonial history; the pernicious effects of the slave trade on economic development; grinding rural poverty; overburdened cities whose burgeoning growth is unguided by proper planning or oversight; common climatic conditions and dependence on natural resources, and challenges in areas such as infrastructure, land reforms, justice, and wealth distribution. Demographically, Brazil is “half Africa” as it has the second highest number of citizens of African origin after Nigeria. Both Brazil and the Portuguese-speaking African countries (PALOP) were ruled by the same European power for centuries. They were both raw material supplier, periphery regions of the world economy, dominated by large estate owners who also served as the ruling political elite.

The major difference is that while Brazil managed to emerge from the shadow of its past and turn into a semi-industrialized nation, most of Africa remained on the level of a raw material producer agrarian society. The lessons learned by Brazil during its lengthy and arduous process of transforming into a semi-periphery nation lend a comparative advantage to Brazilian companies trying to do business in Sub-Saharan Africa. From the similarities in mindset and language to common roots in gastronomy, climate, soil and million other aspects, one can safely assert that a Brazilian has an easier time adapting to the African reality than a European or Chinese, just to name a few of the other rivals of the SSDC. The fact that Brazil has never colonized anyone, – on the contrary, it also suffered the yoke of colonialism –, make her more appealing to the African governments than the perceived neo-colonialism of European, North American and Asian states. In addition to its less intrusive image, Brazil’s ‘Tropical Miracle’ serves as a role model for many African states in terms of economic development. The highly acclaimed social development policies of the Lula administration (Zero Hunger and Family Stipend) are being adapted by various African countries in an attempt to emulate the poverty reduction achieved in the South American nation.

3.2 Brazilian-African relations: an exaggerated concept in today's world?

Notwithstanding, some say that the importance attached to the common historical heritage between Brazil and Africa is exaggerated. The Economic Counsellor of the Brazilian Embassy in Kenya, Mr. Paulo Zerbinati states that – based on experience – Brazilians do not have a major advantage over other countries when it comes to doing business with Africa. The Counsellor attributes the argument that historical connections, climatic similarities and developmental parallels help Brazilians gain the trust of locals to false analysis by researchers in “far-away offices behind computers”. The reality, according to Mr. Zerbinati, is that today's Africans are not aware of the historical link between Brazil and Africa and they do not discern between Brazilians or other nationals when formulating their price offer. The only factor that truly aides Brazilians in the PALOP countries is the knowledge of the Portuguese language, everything else must be earned, says the Economic Counsellor of the Brazilian Embassy in Kenya. This point is echoed by Dr. Erich Schaitza, head of the Ghana office of Brazil's main agricultural research institute, EMBRAPA. The representative of the Odebrecht Group highlights in the survey that the main similarity between Brazilians and Angolans is the so-called *jeito* (way of life), which refers to various aspects of life from making decisions to social interaction and business etiquette.

3.3 Hidden economic agenda in Brazilian-African SSDC

Brazilian trade relations with Africa are distorted by the fact that the vast majority of investments are done by a handful of corporations (as mentioned above). In contrast to their highly visible presence in over a dozen countries, Brazilian SMEs are hesitant in venturing into the unknown markets of the rising continent. The activities of the ‘National Champions’ are strongly driven by the development efforts of the Brazilian government, to the extent that even in the case financing is not available on the side of the African party, the BNDES provided concessional loans at discount rates for the Brazilian companies to undertake the projects. In Angola alone, Odebrecht was the recipient of more than US\$1 billion BNDES credit in the last decade. The nature of the development projects (constructions of roads, dams, power plants, airports, etc.), coupled with the lack of transparency in Brazil's SSDC strategy and the

intertwining of political and business interest back at home facilitated the practice of bribery and kickbacks that were uncovered during the recent police investigations.²

In discussions with Professor Dr. Lyal White, Director of the Centre for Dynamic Markets at the University of Pretoria in South Africa, the academician asserts that Brazil does have a comparative edge over other newcomers on the continent, nevertheless, the pervasive corruption that links business and political leaders make Brazil's development cooperation a "game of the few." Prof. White calls the conservation of old practices and habits "paradigmatic resilience", whereby the families of elites have difficulties breaking the long-engrained cycle of "I give you a hand in need so that you'd give me a hand when I need it."³

One of the main pillars of Brazil's SSDC is the principle of *non-association with commercial or profit interest*. This norm has been seriously challenged with the findings of the Operation Car Wash. The narrative of an unselfish, egalitarian development partner built up by Lula over a decade has been damaged in the course of a couple of years. This is not to say that Brazil's development policy is entirely flawed and does not achieve development results with its partners. Social development and business activities can be mutually beneficial (as witnessed in the wide range of corporate social responsibility projects run by Odebrecht, Vale and Andrade Gutierrez), it is just a question of *to what extent shall business interests determine development cooperation*.

² The former Minister of Planning under the Lula administration, Paulo Bernardo approached Odebrecht, in the middle of negotiating the BNDES loan, to ask for US\$40 million in kickbacks.

³ Interview with Prof. Dr. Lyal White. UoP. Johannesburg, South Africa. 12 March 2012.

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